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### **NEWS RELEASE For Immediate Release**



**December 4, 2015**  
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### **NEBRASKA SPECIALTY CROP PROJECTS GET BOOST FROM USDA GRANT PROGRAM**

Lincoln – Thirteen specialty crop projects in Nebraska will be receiving a total of \$588,900 in funding for 2016 as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP). Administered by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA), the state's program supports research, development and marketing of specialty crops.

"Nebraska's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program has been important in supporting projects that are significant to the state's agriculture industry," NDA Director Greg Ibach said. "Specialty crops represent economic diversity for agriculture in Nebraska."

Specialty crops include fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, horticulture and nursery crops. The 13 SCBGP projects being funded in the state will focus on increased research, production, food safety and health benefits.

NDA is funding two farm-to-school projects among the 13 total. Farm-to-school programs link students to locally-grown foods by making them more accessible. In East Butler High School, students and staff plan to add fresh fruits and vegetables to the school's menu by growing them themselves, year round in a new greenhouse. East Butler High School received a grant for \$22,918. With a grant for \$37,656, the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL) will help connect local farmers with school food service workers to increase school purchasing power and bring more fresh foods to students.

In addition to the two farm-to-school projects, the other specialty crops projects being funded in Nebraska, the organization receiving the funding and the grant amounts are:

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- Researching plant population in Great Northern and pinto bean production in western Nebraska—UNL, \$76,642;
- Increasing knowledge about growing hops in Nebraska—UNL, \$87,061;
- Identifying the best fenugreek seed for organic production in western Nebraska—UNL, \$29,616;
- Determining the impact of fenugreek seed on stomach and intestinal bacteria and the effects on obesity and insulin resistance—UNL, \$27,000.
- Developing the processing of dry edible beans as ready-to-eat snacks to retain a high concentration of folic acid— UNL, \$33,837;
- Providing seminars to specialty crop growers about extending their growing seasons—NDA, \$21,990;
- Teaching alternative tillage techniques to community crops growers and gardeners—Community Crops, \$15,723;
- Researching winter greenhouse production of herbs and medicinal plants—UNL, \$55,652;
- Enhancing food safety with extension education and food safety/security coordination—UNL, \$20,000;
- Increasing education about the nutritional benefits of managing high cholesterol with Great Northern and pinto beans—UNL, \$135,804; and
- Providing small and medium-sized growers information about organic and Biodynamic seed production through on-farm field days, conference presentations, consultation, and special events —Meadowlark Hearth Living Environment Foundation, \$25,000.

A listing of grants that were funded can be found on the USDA website at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/awards> under SCBGP awards.

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